

O 191252Z APR 88  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
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S E C R E T BAGHDAD 02144

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PREL MOPS IZ  
SUBJ: IRAQI OPERATION TO RECAPTURE FAO: "WE SHOWED  
THE SOVIETS"

¶11. (SECRET-ENTIRE TEXT)

¶12. IN A MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR MAY 19, MFA  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DIRECTOR QAYSI DISCUSSED  
THE BRIEFING ON FAO GIVEN BY FONMIN AZIZ TO HIS  
SENIOR STAFF THAT MORNING.

¶13. AZIZ TOLD HIS PEOPLE THAT THE DECISION TO  
RETAKE FAO WAS MADE LAST FALL UNDER ELABORATE  
SECRECY WHEN THE IRAQI LEADERSHIP CONCLUDED THAT  
THE 598 PROCESS WOULD NOT GO ANYWHERE UNLESS IRAQ  
GAVE IT A PUSH BY GAINING SOME MILITARY VICTORY.  
(THE DECISION TO PRESS AHEAD WITH STOCKPILING  
"HUSSEIN" MISSILES FOR MASSIVE USE WAS PROBABLY  
RELATED.). IRAQ THEN ENGAGED IN A CAREFUL DECEPTION  
OPERATION, BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT CREATED A FULL-  
SCALE MODEL OF THE FAO SALT PANS FOR DETAILED  
PRACTICE OPERATIONS BY ITS UNITS. WHEN THE TIME  
FOR THE OPERATION WAS NEAR, SADDAM, MINDEF  
KHAIRALLAH AND THE CHIEF OF STAFF MADE A WELL-  
PUBLISIZED VISIT TO THE NORTH, BUT THEN SECRETLY  
JETTED IMMEDIATELY TO BASRA. PREVIOUSLY SOME  
UNNEEDED ARMY UNITS IN THE SOUTH (WE RECALL REPORT-  
ING ON A FULL DIVISION) WERE MOVED NORTH IN DAYLIGHT  
TO DECEIVE THE IRANIANS FURTHER.

¶14. IRAQI TROOPS JUMPED OFF AT 0625 MAY 17 ACCORDING  
TO AZIZ, AFTER DAWN WHEN IRANIAN UNITS WOULD HAVE  
BEGUN TO RELAX. (AN ORDER TO LAUNCH THE ATTACK AT  
2200 THE PREVIOUS NIGHT WAS PART OF THE DECEPTION).  
IRAQI UNITS ACHIEVED COMPLETE SURPRISE AND PENE-  
TRATED THE ENTIRE IRANIAN DEFENSES IN THE SALT PANS  
IN A GUDERIAN-STYLE OPERATION, LEAVING IT TO  
FOLLOWING UNITS TO MOP UP RESISTANCE WHILE THE TWO  
PINCERS OF THE REPUBLICAN GUARD AND THE SEVENTH  
CORPS JOINED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE OBSTACLE.  
IRAQI UNITS THEN ENTERED FAO THE MORNING OF MAY 18.  
AZIZ SAID THAT IRAQI CASUALTIES HAD BEEN MORE THAN  
REASONABLE FOR SUCH AN OPERATION AND CONSIDERABLY  
LESS THAN PLANNERS HAD ANTICIPATED. AZIZ DID NOT  
GIVE ANY IRANIAN CASUALTY FIGURES OR COMMENT HOW  
MANY MIGHT HAVE ESCAPED.

¶15. QAYSI SAID THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE  
ELATED BY THE NEWS WHICH HE AGREED WAS IRAQ'S  
GREATEST MILITARY SUCCESS SINCE 1980-81. HE RECALLED  
A MEETING HE ATTENDED OF AZIZ WITH SHEVARDNADZE IN  
THE SUMMER OF 1986 IN MOSCOW AFTER THE FAO DEBACLE  
WHEN THE SOVIET, TREATING AZIZ HUMILIATINGLY LIKE  
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF A DEFEATED NATION, URGED HIM  
TO AGREE TO HALT THE WAR ON THE BASIS OF A  
CEASEFIRE IN PLACE. AZIZ TOLD SHEVARDNADZE THAT  
IRAQ WOULD NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS THAN A COMPREHENSIVE  
PEACE WITH FULL WITHDRAWAL AND AN EXCHANGE OF  
PRISONERS, BUT THE SOVIET FONMIN OBVIOUSLY DISMISSED  
THIS POSITION AS PURE PROPAGANDA. NOW IRAQ WAS  
VINDICATED, QAYSI SAID WITH PRIDE, AND HAD SHOWN  
THAT IT ALWAYS MEANT WHAT IT SAID.

¶16. IN A FINAL PURELY PERSONAL COMMENT, QAYSI  
GUESSED THAT IRAQ, FLUSHED WITH SUCCESS, MIGHT NOT BE  
FINISHED HITTING THE IRANIANS. HE WOULD NOT BE  
SURPRISED, HE SAID, TO SEE A SIMILAR OPERATION IN  
THE FUTURE EAST OF BASRA. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED

THAT SUCH AN OPERATION STRAIGHT TOWARDS IRAN COULD  
BE EVEN TOUGHER THAN FAO.

NEWTON